

Turkish “Spring”, European “Fall”: A Political-Economic Analysis of Turkey-European Union Relations

Hatice Yazgan

Çankırı Karatekin University, Çankırı, Turkey
hyazgan@karatekin.edu.tr

Mutlu Yılmaz

Gediz University, İzmir, Turkey
mutlu.yilmaz@gediz.edu.tr

Current stalemate in Turkey-European Union (EU) relations stemming mainly from political issues has taken place by coincidence when both parties namely Turkey and the EU are experiencing peculiar economic circumstances. The EU, on the one hand, has been struggling to restore the effects of debt crisis and on the other hand Turkish economy has been displaying an outstanding economic performance. Turkish economic performance with repercussions in its foreign policy displayed by Turkish economic and political activism in neighboring areas has led to “axis shift” debate in some circles which refers disassociation of Turkey from the “West”. In contrast, the EU, experiencing the deepest economic crisis of ever has also a political turmoil inside and possible scenarios have been discussed for the future of the Union while huge steps are taken which led to more “deepening”. Future of the relations between Turkey and the EU is very much dependent on the future tendencies of both sides which have clues from today’s policies. Combined effect of the EU’s economic/politic deterioration, put it another way “European fall” and Turkish economic performance and foreign policy activism, “Turkish spring” have reinforced the scenarios for the future of the relations. Against this background, this paper aims to analyze the current situation and the future tendencies through the political-economic analysis of the relations. This analysis is two-folded: On the one hand, economic relations of the two-sides will be elaborated by utilizing economic data including basically the foreign trade statistics comparatively analyzed through years and economic interdependency and integration of both sides will be analyzed partly through customs union arrangements and the other common policy areas. On the other hand, political dimension of the relations will be elaborated mainly by analyzing the possible future political scenarios of the EU discussed in European circles. Main argument of this paper is that future of the relations between Turkey and the EU is dependent on the future direction of the EU which should be closely observed by Turkey and although current foreign trade statistics refer different directions other than the EU, Turkey’s economic performance could be leverage for the EU membership given the intertwined nature of political and economic aspects of Turkish accession to the EU.

Keywords: Axis Shift, Debt Crisis, European Union, Turkey, Turkish Economy.